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Users of device may smoke more

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Smokers who use Philip Morris USA's Accord cigarette device inhale virtually no poisonous carbon monoxide, but they might not see any health benefits because they might smoke more often, according to a study by Virginia Commonwealth University researchers.

The study, published in the journal Nicotine and Tobacco Research, showed that smokers get less relief from nicotine cravings when they use Accord.

The study involved 10 smokers in two sessions of two hours each.

The Accord uses a boxlike device with a sensor that heats cigarettes only when the smoker takes a puff. Accord cigarettes are heated to 950 degrees, about 700 degrees cooler than a conventional cigarette.

Philip Morris designed the Accord to reduce secondhand smoke, ash and odors. The company is test marketing it in Richmond and Osaka, Japan.

The VCU study's lead author, Thomas Eissenberg, said the study results indicate that more research should be done to determine the health effects of the smoking devices.

"We really don't know what kind of health risks the Accord poses for the millions of smokers in the U.S. today," said Eissenberg, an assistant professor of psychology at VCU and the university's Institute for Drug and Alcohol Abuse.

Philip Morris USA spokeswoman Mary Carnovale said yesterday the company can't comment on the VCU study because company scientists haven't reviewed it.

"But we are pleased to see that this kind of research is being done on Accord, we look forward to reviewing it, and we will continue to do our own research," she said.

The VCU study showed that Accord smokers had virtually no abnormal levels of carbon monoxide after using the device. Their heart rates were also much lower compared to those rates when they smoke conventional cigarettes.

But the 10 smokers who participated in the study said they still felt nicotine withdrawal symptoms. It took four times as many Accord cigarettes to ease withdrawal compared with conventional cigarettes.

The study was financed by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

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